TRACER

# McHENRY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

AN ILLINOIS CORPORATION (not for profit)

6422 Main Street, Union, Illinois 60180

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VOLUME IV - No. 4 Newsletter SPRING, 1978

## APOLOGY.

When an apology is necessary, it should be the very first order of business and The Tracer has to admit a BAD mistake in our last issue. It seems that the large share of the items for the bee exhibit that were announced as already donated to the museum, should have been listed as items needed to make up the display. Still needed are a smoker, a beehive body, a broad frame, a Queen bee excluder, at least one super with honey boxes, and a guard entrance. The museum does have a hat with veil attached. Please accept our sincere apologies for getting things so twisted about. We DO hope that no one gave away any of these items, thinking the museum was uninterested!

## AN APOLOGY NEEDED.

Soneone has borrowed the 1840 census without checking it out properly from the Museum. It has been gone sometime, so if you are the guilty party, won't you see it returns promptly? No one will ask for the apology. It will just be a pleasure to have it back for use. They are expensive to replace.

## AMONG OUR WANTS.

Someone to restore a wool-spinning wheel so it can be used for demonstrations.

Anyone interested in seeing that other artifacts be restored? There is a considerable list: a cider press, a grape press, an 1852 map, a clavichord from the 1830s, a melodion, an eighty-eight year old organ, and pianos of various ages. Most of these items need the clever touch of professionals, but private persons or organizations may undertake to underwrite the expense, and earn the gratitu de of those interested in seeing the exhibits in working order.

This last item can scarce be called a "want". Rather it is a real need. The museum volunteer staff are very much in need of a duplicator. So far, price has precluded purchase of one although, once bought, it would save a considerable sum of money, month by month. Are there any fairy God-fathers? or fairy God-mothers?

## PEOPLE WANTED.

We are interested in acquiring quantities of people. We do not want them permanently, you understand, just for a couple of hours on one Sunday afternoon in June. The Annual Meeting will be on June eleventh and to be a success, there will have to be people. People to listen to brief reports. People to vote for candidates for the 1978-79 Board of Directors. And people to enjoy the program.

## ANNUAL MEETING.

The program for the meeting will be a slide presentation by Mrs. Dorothy Mastricola of the Time Museum of the Clock Tower Inn (formerly Henrici's) at 7801 East State Street, Rockford, Illinois. Mrs. Mastricola will show pictures of the historical collection of time-keeping devices dating from the twentieth century B.C. to the twentieth century A.D. This is the only museum of its kind devoted to time-keeping which will show this development.

Mrs. Mastricola is a former teacher who has given up that profession to show and lecture about time-keeping devices. She is highly endorsed by the Over Fifty Club of Woodstock, who were in her audience in March and were most enthusiastic about the program.

Please do not forget the date. June eleventh, 1978. Nor the time. One thirty in the afternoon. We think you will find it most enjoyable.

## ACQUISITIONS.

After we beg for help, we give thanks for benefits given! We only put our thanks AFTER our pleas, because we feel you will proceed gladly to "something else" whereas you might not go on to read' more requests.

At our February Board meeting, the members of the Board were told of the gift of a press from Marge Rom from the Crystal Lake Shopper and the Huntley Fireside Press.

Other items have been donated through recent months, some for exhibits and some just for use, and we hope to give you more details in a future issue. It is nice to note that some of the items for use are repeats--that is, the same donor has given a similar item before and when she (or he!) suspects it is about gone, makes another donation. How nice people are.

## NEW MEMBERS.

New members are much appreciated acquisitions. In March we had seven, of whom three are also members of the new Greater Harvard Area Historical Society. These are: Vivian Jackowski, Evonelle Frydenlund, and Robert McCluggage. All have also visited the McHenry County Society's board meeting at least once. The other four are two from Crystal Lake, Ruth Barsanti and Walter Heisterman; one from Algonquin, The Earl Fuerst family, and one from Cary, George Suchy.

So far in April there have been two more memberships from Alden, the LeRoy Richard Family, and Margaret Nolan; and another one from Harvard, the Richard Kynell family.

As always it is a pleasure to welcome new members.

## CHANGE IN DUES VOTED.

Along with everything else, the board has decided there is no way to even keep close to the escalation of expenses save by raising dues. This has been discussed at several meetings and at the April meeting of the Board of directors, it was voted to raise Individual memberships to five dollars, Family memberships to ten, Organizations to fifteen, Business to twenty-five and Life memberships to two hundred dollars. All are reminded that their membership cards admit them to the museum with out any additional charge at all times and for all programs.

ALSO FROM BOARD MEETINGS.

There has been considerable discussion of the Dietrich Carriage collection which has been offered to the McHenry County Historical Society. Since the Cuneo collection is said to have been damaged or destroyed, this is probably the foremost collection in the United States. However, it was finally decided, after a special showing of the carriages for as many of the board as could be present, that there was just no way we could adequately house the whole collection and an effort is being made to obtain the few items we could take care of.

Almost every board meeting has announcements of conventions and tours from which we could learn more effective ways to handle Society and Museum business. As well as being educational, all are entertaining. Such a Spring Tour is being held in Jefferson County, with headquarters at Mt. Vernon, May sixteenth to twentieth. More information can be had from the officers of the McHenry County Society, or calling the Museum.

At the April Board meeting, Ann Rademaker resigned as secretary due to ill health. Nancy Fike took the minutes from this meeting. We are all sorry to have Ann drop.

There was good news, too, when it was voted to accept Nancy Petzelt as a new board member. She has been a faithful guest at meetings and has worked at the museum with the girl scouts. She is very welcome.

SUMMER PROGRAMS.

This is a new undertaking and we hope it is one that will prove popular. If there is anything you would particularly like to see, check to learn if it has been scheduled for the last half of the season, and if it has not, tell a board member, and we will see what can be done. We hope you will keep this list, refer to it and keep the dates that appeal to you for visits to the museum.

Lists similar to the following, for the Sundays from the Museum-opening through May, June and July, will be posted in public places. Or you can post this one in your own home. We hope you will make use of it and call the programs to the attention of your friends.

COME JOIN US THIS SEASON FOR A CLOSE LOOK
AT McHENRY COUNTY HISTORY AT THE
COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM
UNION, ILLINOIS

OPEN: Wednesday (beginning in June) and Sunday May - October. 1:30 - 4:30 p.m.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Admission : | Adults | $1.00 |
| | Senior Citizens | .50 |
| | Children | .25 |
| | School groups | .10 per child |
| | Members with cards | Free |

SUNDAY PROGRAM SCHEDULE *

| | |
|---|---|
| May 7 | Huntley Day featuring choral group, old car display, and lots of local talent |
| May 21 | Union Day highlighted by the Hiawatha Indian Dancers from Elgin at 2:30 |
| June 4 | presently unscheduled |
| June 11 | Annual Meeting |
| June 25 | Girl Scout Day honoring past and present Scouts. Admission free to those in Girl Scout Uniforms |
| July 2 | Pioneer Activity - old fashioned washing demonstration |
| July 9 | Alden Day with pioneer craft demonstrations including butter and soap making |
| July 16 | Hebron Day. Artifacts and heirlooms from the family of Alice and Frances Bailey will be displayed. |
| July 23 | presently unscheduled |
| July 30 | McHenry Day. Mrs. Mary Walker will present a demonstration at 2:00 on the drying of flowers. |

* Programs for August through October will be announced later.

For additional information please call the museum at 815-923-2267 or call 815-385-6967.

Most of us, when we are so fortunate as to obtain the use of one of the 1885 histories of the county, are looking for some fact, likely under a certain name or locality. However if you can spend time to browse through it, fascinating stories can be found. We mean to tell you one such story in these pages.

At the time of the Revolutionary War, Johannies Deitz and his wife lived near Rensselaerville, New York. (This town has since dropped the "ville" portion of its name.) Located on the banks of the Hudson, all residents were easy prey for the English, the Tories--the name for those Americans who remained loyal to the king--and the Indians. This is what happened to the Dietz family. Their son, Captain Dietz, his wife and four children were living with Johannies and his wife. When the Indians came, all were killed excepting Captain Dietz and two Scotch boys who were working there. Everything of value was taken out of the house and barns and the buildings were burned. The three prisoners were taken to Canada, and there Captain Dietz, probably wounded when the family were beset by the Indians and Tories, died. So that the family would seem to have been wiped out. However, a younger son, named James, had been away from home at the time, and when he returned to the devastation of what had been a happy family farm, he could not bear to remain there. In time he would buy a farm near Colliersville (on which was a lovely apple orchard planted by the Indians) and marry. His son, William, was born on this farm and grew up to marry Martha McGuire, daughter of Hugh McGuire, who had been "pressed" into the British army and brought to America to fight the rebels. He deserted the British army as soon as he could get away and joined that of the Americans--the rebels he had been brought to fight. He fought with these troops until the war ended. The son of James and Martha was born on a farm near Oneonta, New York and given the name of Peter, in January, 1808.

He went to the local schools in the winter months and eventually entered the Cazenovia Seminary. But he was not satisfied and like so many other young men of his generation he felt the urge to go farther west, and left home to go to Michigan, and then to Indiana. In both states he taught school, did surveying work and read law with local attorneys. He was admitted to the bar in Rushville, Indiana in 1836 at the age of twenty-eight. Then he went back home to visit and perhaps to show his family how well he had done. But it was just a visit and 1837 found him coming one state further west. He settled on a farm about six miles from Marengo. He was welcomed to the community and in 1842 ran, as a Whig, for the state legislature. He did not win but did carry his home county, so the next year he ran for County School Commissioner and won.

1843 was a good year for him for that year he was also married. A couple of years later, he and his wife moved to Marengo. (She had been Lucy Edna Jewett, the daughter of a cousin of Oliver H. Perry, the naval hero of Lake Erie.) He would continue to be elected to local offices and in 1847 was a delegate to the Constitutional Convention.

As his family grew, he continued with both his legal and political work. After eighteen years of marriage, his wife died, leaving him with four children, three sons, Addison, William and Franz and a daughter named for her mother. At this time he was a member of the Board of County supervisors and was known for the work he did for the returning soldiers. In the fall of 1868, he was elected as a Republican to the State Legislature, and in December of that year he remarried. His only daughter had been drowned in a boating accident early in the summer of that year at Crystal Lake and the womanless home was a lonely place. He returned to Oneonta and brought Sophia Slingerland back as his bride. She, too, would proceed him in death.

Two of Peter Dietz' sons continued to reside in Marengo, and in the early 1900s, the farm was still known as the Dietz farm. There are to-day numerous people with that surname in the county, but The Tracer does not have genealogical background to say who may be the descendants of this particular family.

## A STORY FROM THE PAST THAT STILL CONTINUES.

With our advertising page begun in the last Tracer, we feel now is a good time to begin our stories about our different advertisers. One of the first people to "sign on the dotted line"--so to speak--was Colby Motor Sales of Crystal Lake. The organization is to-day owned by Fred and Scott Colby but it was initiated by their Grandfather, Fred L. Colby, as a farm implement business. This was in 1886. As the years went by, he added Case equipment, McCormick-Deering machines, steam engines, water pumps, wagons and other similar items. He also ran a blacksmith shop. Mr. Colby took his son, Claude V. into partnership with him in 1900. In 1904 they were franchised as a Ford dealership due to Henry Ford's realization that farm implement dealers with their mechanical "know-how" were natural born dealers for Fords, both to sell and service them.

At that time, a dealer was not restricted to one car and the Colbys sold not only Fords, but also Overlands, Durants, Stars, Sterns, Knights, Willys-Knights, Oldsmobiles, Buicks, Chevrolets, Studebakers, Pierce Arrows, and De Sotos. In 1924, they signed a franchise with Walter Chrysler, and they still continue to sell this auto. They also handle Plymouths. Fred became a partner in the business in 1933, and his brother joined the company the next year. Colbys are sort of a tradition in Crystal Lake, their place of business is a sort of daily "open house" for friends, and everyone who comes in is a friend.

## ANOTHER CONTINUING STORY

The 1877 Directory of McHenry County lists a general store at Big Foot, at that time belonging to S. G. W. Mills, who had come to Big Foot from Williamstown, Massachusetts, but the present store building was erected in 1892 for George Stewart (father of Lynn and the late Edward Stewart). He operated a general store here until he sold out to a man named Guthrie, who in turn sold to Albert Tooker, from whom Ray Wilkinson and H. W. Binnie purchased both building and business. Then in 1908, Mr. Wilkinson bought out his partner and was the sole owner until he died in 1965. The Wilkinson family sold the store to Russ Gunderson, formerly of Prospect Heights, Illinois. Although he was a writer, employed in advertising and sales promotion, his hobby was country stores. With this purchase, his dreams became reality. He became an antique merchandiser and a lecturer on country stores, and the Big Foot General Store has been described as the best restoration of a General Store in the Midwest. He has a superb collection of museum items in his store, and word has spread as to the authenticity of his treasures. People come from far and near to visit and to see the store. Channel 7, a Chicago TV station, has devoted two entire half hour broadcasts to the store, and were rewarded by a great deal of listener interest.

## WE GET LETTERS.

But seldom have we received one more interesting than this one from Everett Thomas of Woodstock. He says: "I have just recently obtained information that is very interesting about the early history of McHenry County. I have a Cousin, Glen Draper, who has been secretary of the McHenry Cemetery for 25 years. They want to install a sign with the name and date of the cemetery. Glen casually indicated his books list two families that were buried there 1817 & 1819 and the stones were there to mark the graves. I could not believe it as the first settlers to stay in McHenry was 1836 and the first recorded death was 1836. I saw and took pictures of the stones and have copies of the pages in the cemetery book. Maybe The Tracer can help in spreading the names in a coming issue that someone might recognize.

| | This is how they are listed | Birth | Death |
|---|---|---|---|
| Lot | Grave 2 Emeline wife of Joel Osman | 1788 | 1819 |
| 23B4 | Grave 3 Sarah dau of Joel & Louisa Osman | 1851 | Sept. 13, 1852 |
| | 1 Yr - 1 Month - 10 Days | | |
| | Grave 4 Phebe J. dau of Joel & Louisa Osman | 1841 | Dec. 16, 1857 |
| | 16 Yrs. - 1 Mo - 21 Days | | |
| Lot | Grave 2 Sunken grave soldier | | |
| 18B4 | Grave 3 Ceilia E wife of R.J. Osman Osman age 27 | 1796 | Mar. 8, 1817 |
| | Grave 4 Chester W 1847 & Richard 1847 Sons of R.J. & C.E. Osman | | |
| | Grave 5 Lucy A dau of R.J. & C.E. Osman Osman 8 yr, 10 mo. | 1810 | Feb. 5, 1815 |
| | Grave 6 A grave? | | |

I cannot find the name Osman listed in any of the early histories of McHenry County. The first cemetery in McHenry was near the mill pond dam then was moved to its present location. What intrigues me is the dates 1817 & 1819 years before the first recorded death. Were they buried somewhere else and moved to McHenry? There are a lot of questions that are unanswered. Maybe someone can supply an answer."

CAN ANYONE HELP?

## THINGS OF INTEREST TO HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERS FROM OTHER TOWNS

### LOCAL HISTORY ROOM ESTABLISHED IN CITY OF McHENRY LIBRARY

Last year, with the completion of the new edition to the McHenry Public Library, a special room was set aside to house an increasing collection of McHenry area records and artifacts. Located in the oldest part of the building (the William Tesch house, reportedly the oldest home in McHenry), this collection includes many photographs of people from McHenry and the surrounding area dating back to the 1860's.

Librarian June Stuart said they have been collecting historical material for about 15 years. Although there is now a special room to house it, there is still a lot of catologuing needed to be done. At present, people are allowed in, with permission, to view and use the material but not to take it out.

Mrs. Stuart, along with Mrs. Dorothy Uttich, is asking for copies of subdivision, church, club, and family histories for the collection. Eventually they hope to collect and transcribe oral histories of the various ethnic groups

in the area that the League of Women Voters volunteered to tape for them.

The preservation of these records is a continuing process accomplished with community support, and Mrs. Stuart is looking forward to the day when this history room will serve as a source of genealogical research and community information.

Nancy Fike

## A BANK TO STORE ANCESTORS

In Streamwood, the Poplar Creek Genealogical Society has opened an "Ancestor Information Bank" to aid area residents interested in tracing family records.

One feature of the "bank" will be family Bible records. Through facilities at the Poplar Creek Library, 20 West Streamwood Blvd., Streamwood, Bible records will be copied free of charge. The Bible will be returned immediately, unharmed, while the information copied goes into the bank.

These records will not only assist future researchers but offer security in the event the family Bible is lost.

## AT WOODSTOCK

We have before mentioned the work the tax-supported Historic commission is doing in our county seat, and the brochures they have made obtainable concerning historic structures in that town.

## AT HARVARD

The Harvard Historical Society had its furst quarterly meeting for the general membership on April sixth. Called to order by the president, Robert McCluggage, business matters were kept very brief. The entertainment for the meeting was provided by Shuji Kimura, member of the McHenry County Society's Board of Directors and chairman of the latter society's landmark commission. He showed his slides of McHenry County's historical homes and other places with accompanying pictures of what was taking place elsewhere in the world when these things were occurring in this area. His audience found it very interesting.

On exhibit that evening were numerous Harvard High School Annuals, dating back to 1913, and the Harvard Area 1829-1976 book.

After the program, refreshments were served, and people enjoyed talking of the sights they had just seen, and others they would like Mr. Kimura to add to another program.

## OBITUARIES.

In March, Hebron lost one of her senior citizens, Clara Scholl, aged eighty six. In the 1968 History of McHenry County, there had been this account of her life.

> For over fifty years, Clara Douglass Scholl (Mrs. Raymond) has been serving the Hebron community as a piano teacher. She is a graduate of the Chicago Conservatory of Music. Occasionally she has had as many as fifty pupils at one time. She and her students have made a real contribution to the musical life of Hebron through their service to church and civic organizations and in furthering appreciation of all good music. The Hebron Methodist Church has honored her with special recognition for her faithfullness as pianist and organist for its congregation.
>
> This account was provided to the history by her former pupil, Miss Alice Bailey.
>
> Mrs. Scholl had been an active member of her community, with membership in the Hebron-Richmond Chapter of Eastern Star, the Hebron and McHenry Methodist Churches, Eugene Drill Post, American Legion Auxiliary, and the Ladies Afternoon Social Club. She served on the Hebron Cemetery Board for many years.
>
> She will be missed in her home town.

## ANOTHER LOSS.

Another of our senior citizens to leave us in this past quarter was Neva Van Ness of Huntley. Mrs. Van Ness was born in November 1882 in Huntley and had been a surveyor of our county scene all the days of her life. She was a little girl when Thomas Huntley, for whom her home town was named, died and was buried in the Huntley cemetery.

She was the daughter of John and Mina Weltzein Hawley. She was a member of the Congregational church, and her funeral services were conducted by the Rev. Roger Mealiff. She, too, was buried in the Huntley cemetery.

Mrs. Van Avery of Richmond, another of our older residents, died during this quarter. She was the mother of Wanda Todd, one of the members of the County Historical Society Board's members. To Mrs. Todd, and the surviving members of all these families we offer our sincerest condolences.

## LONG AGO OBITUARIES.

Recently some clippings came into the possession of the museum and among them are the obituaries of two Harvard railroad men, a father and a son. I am sure if such an accident as killed the younger man happened nowdays, it would make the front pages of the local papers, and maybe get a paragraph in the big city papers, but this is reported in the obituary column.

The catastrophe happened at DesPlaines where Edward A. Stoker, attempting to couple a slowly moving freight train to a locomotive, missed his footing and fell across the tracks. He was immediately run over by a heavy freight car. He was not instantly killed but both thighs were crushed. He had to be taken to Chicago to get hospital care, but died that same evening. He had been born in 1858, and at the time of his death was twenty-eight years old. His body was returned to Harvard where he was buried from the Methodist church, with the Rev. G.C. Clark officiating.

His father was a railroad crossing guard at the Ayer Street crossing in Harvard. These men were usually very well known and trusted in the communities they served, as they were responsible for the lives of all those who had occasion to cross the tracks, either on foot, or with wagons, buggies, surreys and on horseback. Children were taught to obey their orders implicitly, and the guard took his duties very seriously. Gates and flashing lights were still decades away in 1886.

Mr. Stoker would continue at his work after his son's death, but we do not know the number of years. While his son is listed as leaving behind his parents, a sister and a small son, the older man has no survivors mentioned other than his wife, who had awakened in the night to the sound of his distressed breathing, sought the aid of Doctors Goddard and Maxon, but even with their help could not save her husband.

The clippings make us suddenly realize how continual in our society the grief of sudden death has been.

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Big Foot, Illinois

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WHAT CLASS?

WHAT SCHOOL?

WHERE?

WHEN?

THIS HOUSE STOOD WHERE ST. JOSEPH'S RECTORY IS NOW

90th Birthday Picture

Last quarter we carried the life story of Jessie Bowdish of Alden. To-day we would like to wish her a happy centennial birthday. She is 100 years old this month!

McHENRY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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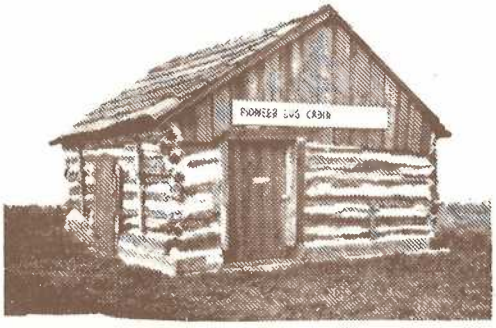


IF YOUR ADDRESS IS INCORRECT,
WON'T YOU MAIL US A CARD?